

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE TEHUELCHES. 195

Schmid—has usually been assigned to them. They certainly |8| do not deserve the epithets of ferocious savages, brigands of the desert, &c. They are kindly, good-tempered, impulsive children of nature, taking great likes or dislikes, becoming firm friends or equally confirmed enemies. They are very naturally suspicious of strangers, but especially those of 648 Spanish origin, or, as they term them, *Cristianos*. Nor, considering the treatment—treacherous cruelty and knavish robbery—experienced by them at the hands of the invaders and colonists alternately, is this to be wondered at.

In the southern part of the country, their frequent intercourse with sealers on the coast has rendered them favourably disposed towards Englishmen. This remark, of course, does not extend to the northern Tehuelches, who have not the same opportunities.

In my dealings with them I always treated with fair-577 ness and consideration, and my few belongings—although borrowed at times, according to their mutual way of acting towards one another—were taken the greatest care of; thus an Indian would frequently ask to look at my arms, and, after examining them, would carefully return them to me. During my whole stay amongst them I only lost two articles: the first, a flint and steel, was, I have reason to believe, stolen by one of the Chilians; the second was a pair of ostrich balls, which were abstracted from the *toldo*. The Indians, although honest enough as regards each other, will, nevertheless, not scruple to steal from any one not belonging to their party. Thus, when they enter the colonies for trade, they will pick up a stray horse in the most natural manner; and in Santa Cruz, Graviel and others constantly pilfered iron nails and small articles. With regard to their truthfulness, my experience was as follows. In minor affairs they nearly always 577 lie, and will invent stories for sheer amusement; thus, 522 Mrs. Orake came to me whilst in Teckel with the news that Casimiro's wife was dead. My remark was, 'And a good riddance too!' which was received with a burst of laughter,

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[522] and the information that she was as alive as ever, only her eyes were bad. I could cite many other similar instances of romancing on the part of the Indians. Old Orkeke I never caught out in a direct lie, and he always, when informing me about any subject, added, 'I do not lie.' In anything of importance, however, such as guaranteeing the safety of person, they were very truthful, as long as faith was kept with them. After a time, when they ascertained that they invariably avoided deviating in any way from the truth, they left off lying to me even in minor matters. This will serve to show that they are not of the treacherous nature assigned to them by some ignorant writers. Nor are they habitually cruel, even to slaves or captives. The Chilian deserters were always well housed and fed, and lent horses to ride; and nothing but their incurably bad dispositions and constant plots brought on them a fate which, in truth, could hardly be thought ill-deserved, whereas the few good ones of the party rose into high favour.

273 For my own part, I felt far safer among the Tehuelches,
152 as long as they had no drink or no fights, than I subsequently did in the Rio Negro. Of course when they are drunk their passions become unbridled; they remember old feuds, and at times will fight for mere fighting's sake. It is not necessary, however, to go so far as Patagonia to observe this. The
593 finest trait, perhaps, in their character is their love for their
152 wives and children; matrimonial disputes are rare, and wife-beating unknown; and the intense grief with which the loss of a wife is mourned is certainly not 'civilised,' for the widower will destroy all his stock and burn all his possessions: thus Paliki, before the death of his wife, was a wealthy Indian; but when I knew him he was poor and reckless, having destroyed all his property, and taken to gambling and drinking in despair at his loss. Casimiro even declared that his son Sam—whom I certainly should not have suspected of disinterested affection for any human being—had ruined himself, and become careless of his life, after his wife's death.

000 shoal water, barely up to the horses' knees. The current was rapid, and masses of floating ice were swept along with it. When half way across, my horse took fright, reared, and, in attempting a sudden turn, precipitated me into the water, and fell heavily upon me. The ducking and the bruise together were severe, and, among other disasters, the crystal of my watch was broken by the shock. This I had kept carefully secreted, as a last resort, to amuse the savages when other expedients should fail, — when memory and invention could yield no more tales, when promises should have become threadbare with repetition, and when pretensions of greatness at home should have lost their power by the every-day disclosure of present weakness and humiliation.

We — that is to say, myself and the old horse — kicked and floundered a while in the cold water, till at last the creature succeeded in rising, and I followed his example. [522] We waded ashore, dripping, amidst the uproarious laughter of the whole troop. Once more mounted on my Rosinante, we resumed our line of march. The chill from my cold bath so benumbed me that I had to dismount and lead the horse, to recover, by brisk walking, some portion of animal warmth. Our course was down the river towards the Atlantic. Being unsuccessful in the chase, we pitched our tents at night, supperless, and without prospect of breakfasting the next morning. A small fire was lighted, which I hugged as closely as possible, to thaw my stiffened limbs; and then, cold, wet and hungry, fagged to extremity, cast myself on the ground, to repose as I might. The next morning was stormy. It cleared up in the afternoon, and the Indians sallied out to find some food. My only refresh-